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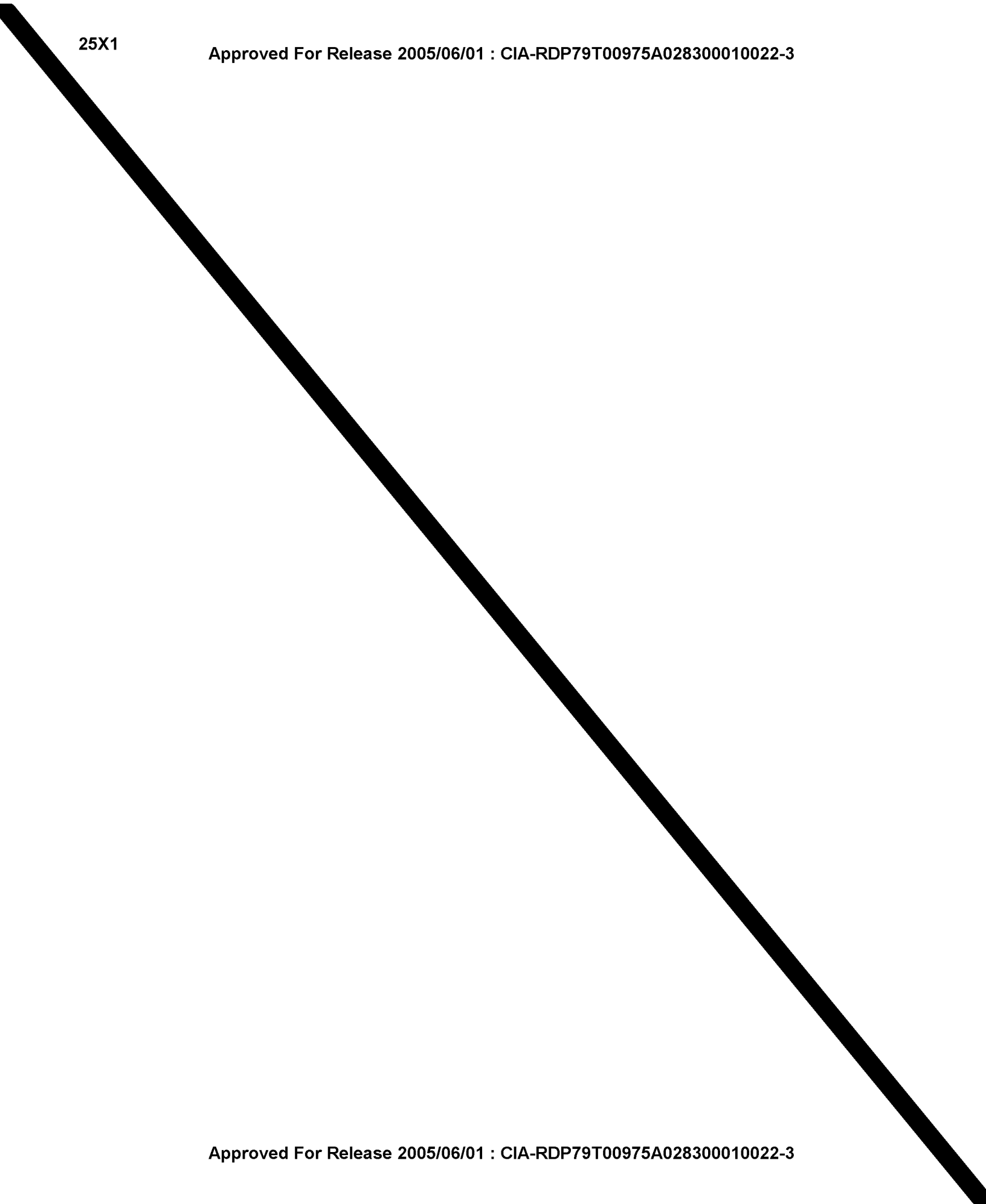

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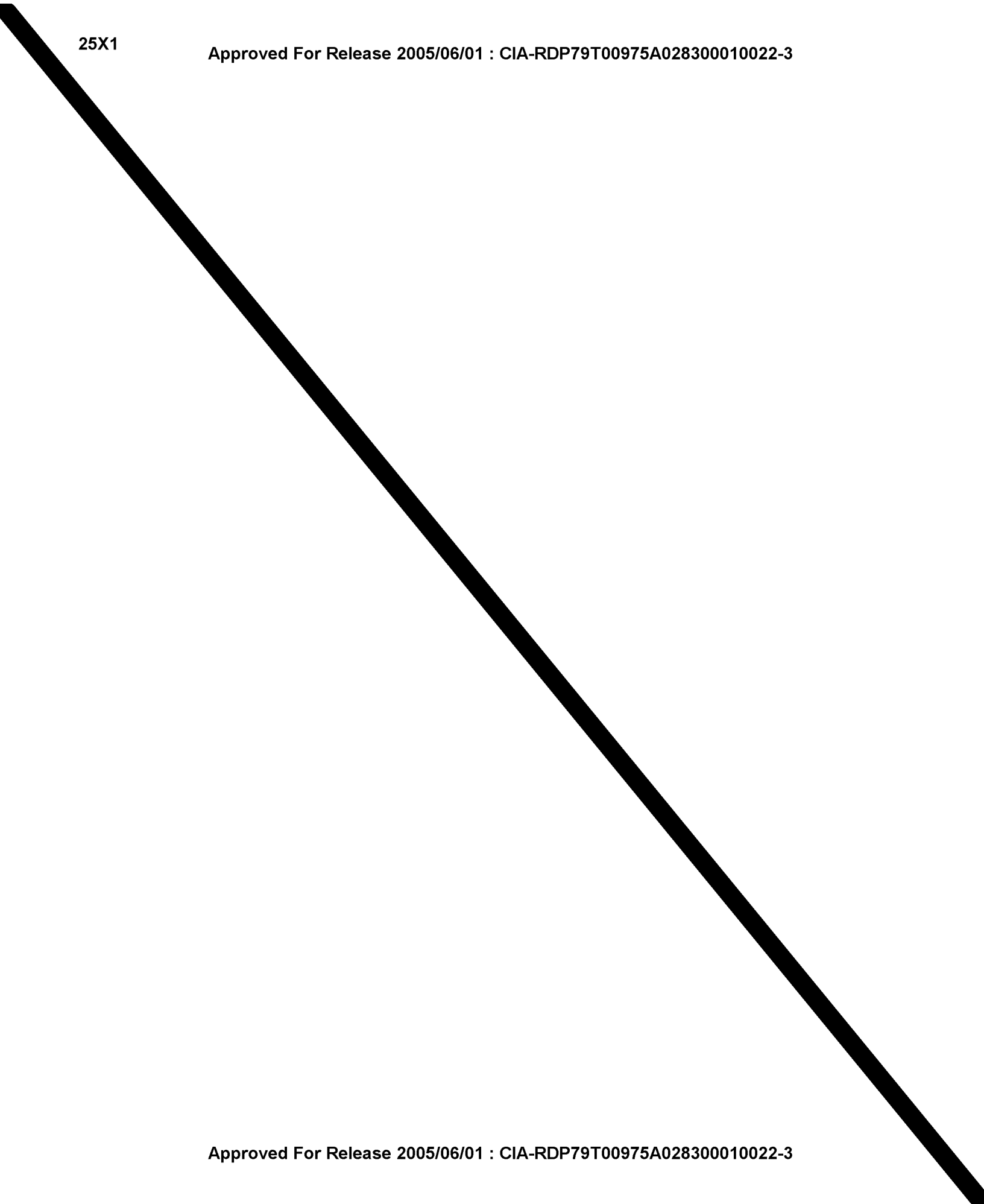

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INDIA

The Supreme Court, which last week overturned Prime Minister Gandhi's conviction for campaign violations in 1971, yesterday dealt her a major setback. It refused to reconsider a two-year-old ruling restricting the power of parliament, which Gandhi's party controls, to amend the constitution. Gandhi may react by launching a campaign to curb the power of the courts.

In 1973, the court decided by a vote of 7 to 6 that parliament is not empowered to alter the constitution's "basic structure" or "framework." The terms were not further defined, leaving it open to the court to interpret them.

Last month the court announced that it would reconsider the controversial ruling, following government urging that it do so in order to clarify the powers of the legislature. On November 12, however, Chief Justice Ray announced the dissolution of the 13-man bench that he had convened two days earlier to review the ruling. The justices reportedly voted overwhelmingly to drop the review.

Gandhi presumably views the 1973 ruling as hampering her maneuverability. She has often used her large majority in parliament to push through constitutional amendments when other means of attaining her goals failed. One of these amendments, passed by parliament since proclamation of the emergency in June, was recently struck down by the courts.

The Prime Minister and other members of her government have complained that parliament—representing "the people"—is frequently blocked by the courts, which, they allege, represent only a "small minority." Gandhi is certain to be further antagonized by what is in effect a reiteration by the court of its role as primary authority on the content of the constitution.

In recent months there have been indications that Gandhi may be planning action to strip the courts of some of their powers. One way for her to do this legally would be to call a constituent assembly, perhaps made up of the present parliament, to rewrite the constitution.

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BANGLADESH

President Sayem announced on November 11 that he and the chiefs of the military services would replace the heads of the government's 26 ministries who had been dismissed earlier.

Sayem will hold six ministries, including Defense; Foreign Affairs; Planning; and Law, Parliamentary Affairs, and Justice. Major General Zia ur-Rahman, army chief of staff, will control seven ministries, including Finance and Home Affairs. The remaining portfolios were divided nearly equally between the other service chiefs. The new jobs are in addition to the various positions already held by these officials.

The assignment of these responsibilities at this time is an attempt to achieve stability in Dacca. The appointments could also be meant to assure India that the new government is firmly in control of the situation.

there is still some dissension among some army enlisted men, Major General Zia is bringing the situation under control. Normal operations are being conducted by some military units outside Dacca, indicating that what dissidence exists is confined largely to the Dacca-based units.

ECUADOR

General Rodriguez' grip on the country may be weakening, in the wake of a call to civil disobedience from the National Revolutionary Party and a 12-hour general strike scheduled for today.

Rodriguez has been unable to rebuild his support within the military since the attempted coup of September 1. In addition, he has found no ready resolution to the economic problems that in large part lay behind the coup attempt. His reaction to the strike, to labor's demands, and to the likely involvement of the country's volatile student community could bear directly on his longevity in office.

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ITALY

Negotiations for the renewal of labor contracts involving about a quarter of the Italian work force are being complicated by sharp divisions within organized labor over what line to take in the talks. The dispute reflects not only differences over bargaining strategy but also competition for influence in the labor movement between the Christian Democratic and Communist-dominated labor confederations.

Labor is represented in the negotiations by a federation that includes both organizations but which is, in fact, dominated by the Communist one. As part of their effort to stress a responsible approach to the country's economic problems, Communist labor leaders have used their influence to have the federation push for job security measures rather than excessive wage increases. The government and employers have generally welcomed that policy, but it has met with increasing opposition from the rank and file in the federation and from unions that are not affiliated with it.

At least some of the widespread strike activity now affecting Italy—the week opened with over a million workers on strike—is part of an effort by the federation leadership to satisfy rank-and-file pressure for a more militant stance.

But the federation's moderate line is also threatened by growing rivalry within the organization between Communist and Christian Democratic labor leaders. The Communists' dramatic gains in the local elections last summer appear to have dampened Christian Democratic enthusiasm for the labor unity movement that gave birth to the federation three years ago.

As a result, Christian Democratic labor leaders are now taking pains to stress their independence from the Communists. Ironically, however, this is leading the Christian Democratic union to urge the federation to adopt a more militant policy, since the Communists have already preempted the moderate ground.

At the same time, the Christian Democratic labor union seems to be reviving its interest in party affairs—which has flagged as the labor unity movement has gone forward. Its leader recently joined a group of party activists who are trying to restore Christian Democratic ties to industrial workers.

As long as the dispute in the labor movement continues, Prime Minister Moro will need all of his tactical skill to avoid additional strains on his government, which includes supporters of both sides. Moro has been successful in the preliminary talks, but the stiffest challenges will come between now and December, when most of the actual contracts will be negotiated. [redacted] 25X1

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INTERNATIONAL GRAIN

Even though a year has elapsed since the World Food Conference in Rome urged speedy adoption of measures to improve world food security, US initiatives to establish a grain reserve are running into difficulty.

The US proposal, presented to the International Wheat Council in London in late September, calls for:

--establishment of a 30-million-ton grain reserve—25 million wheat and 5 million rice—an amount believed sufficient to offset most shortfalls in world production;

--each nation to hold a fair share of the reserves and to make available data on its production and stocks;

--accumulation and release of the reserves to be triggered by a quantitative indicator based on stock levels and deviations in production from the long-term production trends.

Most countries, while generally concurring with the proposal, prefer to use a price mechanism as a trigger to release or add to stocks. The EC wants the discussions to be held concurrently in London and at the multilateral trade negotiations in Geneva. Through this tactic, the EC hopes to shift the discussion of grain reserves for food security to its own concept of a buffer stock for price stabilization. The EC has so far refused to attend further working group meetings in London to discuss the US plan.

Deliberation of the proposal at the multilateral trade negotiations is not likely to prove useful, since the USSR—a principal source of grain trade instability—is not a participant. Moreover, adoption of a reserve plan in Geneva would be delayed because it would become part of the lengthy trade negotiations. Talks there are currently stalled over negotiating procedures. The EC insists on negotiating agricultural issues separately from other trade discussions, while Washington favors integration of agricultural issues with other topics.

If progress is not made soon on an international food reserve, developing countries are likely to assert a larger role in other forums, especially the Food and Agriculture Organization, where reaching a meaningful agreement would be even less likely. The USSR is not a participant in the Food and Agriculture Organization.

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ANNEX

Cuba's Role in Angola

Cuba's leaders apparently decided sometime during the summer to take on a major role in the Angolan civil war. The Cubans probably were under heavy pressure from the Soviet Union and the Soviet-backed Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola to become more directly involved, especially once the Popular Movement had suffered serious losses in the field.

Cuba has aided the Popular Movement for more than a decade, but Havana's assistance has surged

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